Right-wing recall campaign defeated in California

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The right-wing recall campaign targeting California Governor Gavin Newsom was decisively defeated Tuesday, with about 64 percent of those participating in the election voting "no" on the recall. The leading Republican candidate in the replacement election, the fascistic talk radio host Larry Elder, conceded just a few hours after the polls closed.

With about two-thirds of all ballots tabulated, just over 9.1 million votes, the "no" vote was ahead of the "yes" vote by a margin of 5.8 million to 3.3 million. There was overwhelming opposition to the recall in the populous coastal counties, including Los Angeles and the Bay Area, with the "no" vote topping 80 percent in Alameda County (Oakland-Berkeley) and San Francisco.

The "yes" vote was ahead only in traditionally Republican counties in the agricultural San Joaquin Valley and the lightly populated rural northeast portion of the state.

The Socialist Equality Party's candidate, David Moore, running in the replacement election on a campaign of mobilizing the working-class to fight for socialism and eliminate COVID-19 transmission, has received so far 20,831 votes, a significant showing for a campaign in which Moore was listed only as an independent and not as a socialist. He won the largest vote among independent candidates except for the Hollywood celebrity Angelyne.

The vast majority of those who voted "no" followed the recommendation of the Democratic Party not to cast a vote for any of the replacement candidates. The effect was that while 9 million voted on the recall, only 5 million voted on the replacements, a vote whose results are moot because the recall was defeated.

Of the 5 million votes cast in the replacement election, 3.4 million votes went to 24 Republicans, with the ultra-right talk-show host Larry Elder winning the lion's share, about 2.4 million. About 1.4 million votes were cast for the nine replacement candidates running as Democrats, with real estate investor Kevin Paffrath, who financed his own campaign, winning the largest number, about 500,000.

The margin of defeat for the recall was slightly larger than Newsom's margin of victory in the 2018 gubernatorial election, when he defeated Republican John Cox by 62 percent to 38 percent. However, the "no" margin may decline somewhat after late returns come in from rural areas and more ballots are counted that were deposited at polling stations on election day, where Republicans were expected to predominate.

While the defeat of the recall is being hailed by the Democratic Party and its media allies, the very fact that the Democratic governor of the largest Democratic-dominated state was under threat is an indication of mass alienation from this capitalist party.

Throughout the summer, opinion polls showed Newsom in some danger, because the vast majority of Democratic voters were indifferent or hostile to his right-wing administration, which has boosted corporate interests and the wealthy against the working class. On the central issue of the coronavirus pandemic, Newsom allowed wealthy businessmen like Elon Musk to do as they pleased in keeping their factories open, while pushing through the reopening of schools under conditions where school children, as well as their teachers and parents, are in deadly danger.

Newsom was only able to regain his position politically by essentially nationalizing the race, taking advantage of the rise of Larry Elder as the likely Republican replacement. Elder embraced Trump's claims of a stolen election in 2020, as well as an entire range of fascistic views, from scrapping all pandemic-

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related safety measures to outlawing abortion. This allowed Newsom to frame the recall, not as for or against himself, but as for or against Trump, who is widely hated among working people in California.

This argument was backed up by the full mobilization of the national Democratic Party, with visits by Vice President Kamala Harris, senators Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren, and effusive endorsements by Senator Bernie Sanders and former president Barack Obama, culminating in an election-eve appearance by President Biden at a campaign rally in Long Beach.

The impact of this support was reinforced by a tidal wave of campaign cash, perhaps more than $100 million, 10 times what was spent by Elder and the Republicans. Silicon Valley billionaires were the single largest source of campaign funds, including big shareholders of Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, Google and Yahoo.

In his victory speech, Newsom said, “We said yes to science, yes to vaccines, yes to ending this pandemic.” The grim reality is that the Democrats have already decided on a policy of allowing COVID-19 to become endemic through mass infections. Following the Biden administration’s lead, Newsom insisted on the resumption of in-person instruction at the end of last school year and the end of lockdown and mask mandates on June 15, leading to the current surge of Delta variant infections.

Now after the end of summer vacation, as children have been returning to the classroom, pediatric hospitalizations have soared and daily deaths from COVID are at the same level as last year before the vaccine was available. By refusing to eliminate COVID transmission the Democrats are preparing the same conditions in California as exist in Texas and Florida.

In order to stifle any left-wing opposition to their homicidal policies, the Democrats demanded as a matter of party discipline that no prominent Democrat run in the replacement election against Newsom. This mandate was obeyed by the Democratic Socialists of America, which operates as a faction of the Democratic Party, as well as other pseudo-left groups like Socialist Alternative, the Party for Socialism and Liberation and Socialist Action.

In opposition to both the right-wing recall and the Democratic Party’s refusal to carry out basic public health measures, the Socialist Equality Party ran David Moore, an Oakland public school teacher, as our candidate. Moore actively intervened in the struggles of teachers from Arizona to California in 2018 and 2019, including a strike in his own district, and has a history of defending struggles of workers in mass transit, the oil refineries, and other industries.

The SEP campaign was the only one that presented a socialist program in a fight to eradicate the pandemic and build an independent political movement of the working class. Over the last several months, Moore has issued statements on the medical crisis confronting California, the wildfire disaster, homelessness and other issues, culminating in two online town hall meetings.

As of this writing, Moore is nearing 21,000 votes, 0.4 percent of the total, with 68 percent of precincts reporting. The bulk of Moore’s votes came in Los Angeles, where he received 0.5 percent of the vote, and in the six counties of the San Francisco Bay Area, where his vote was as high as 0.8 percent in his home county, Alameda (Oakland-Berkeley).

The election results reflect the continued domination of the two main capitalist parties, whose candidates had a near-monopoly of the media attention and captured the bulk of the vote—although as many as 40 percent of registered voters declined to participate in the massively publicized event.

A total of 175,000 votes were cast for third-party and independent candidates in the replacement election. Of these, David Moore received about 12 percent, far more than any other candidate claiming to be socialist, and trailing only the Greens and Libertarians among third-party candidates. The SEP candidate, however, was denied a ballot label identifying him as a socialist, while the Green and Libertarian candidates had party labels on the ballot.

Although the election is over, the class-conscious vote secured by the SEP’s campaign is just the start of an intensifying fight to secure safe schools and workplaces by eliminating COVID-19.

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